

# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

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MRS. ABBY (BROWN) FRANCIS (1766-1821)

DAUGHTER OF JOHN AND SARAH (SMITH) BROWN. HER MARRIAGE TO  
JOHN FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA TOOK PLACE IN HER FATHER'S RED  
BRICK MANSION ON THE HILL, JANUARY 1, 1788.

*Silhouette made in London. Courtesy of Mrs. Maurice K. Washburn*

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ISSUED QUARTERLY AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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HARRIS H. BUCKLIN, *President*

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*The Society assumes no responsibility for the  
statements or the opinions of contributors.*

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## Mrs. Vice-President Adams Dines with Mr. John Brown and Lady\*

Through the courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, we are privileged to publish for the first time two letters from Abigail Adams, recounting her visit to Providence (1789). They are to her sister Mary, wife of Richard Cranch of Braintree. The second letter, praising John Brown House settles perhaps, the source of an admiring description generally attributed to her son, John Quincy Adams.

In February, 1788, John Adams was recalled to the United States from England, after eight months spent in Paris, following the Peace Treaty, and at the Hague, and three years in England, with his family, as envoy to the Court of St. James (1785-88).

On arrival home he was elected to Congress, but never took his seat, as he was elected Vice-President in May, 1789.

The two letters which follow were written when Mrs. Adams was on her way from her home in Quincy to "Richmond Hill" the house occupied by the Adams family in New York, then the seat of the government.

\*Notes by Martha W. Appleton, formerly an assistant at Rhode Island Historical Society.

Providence, June 19, 1789

My Dear Sister

This Day is the Anniversary of my Landing in Boston<sup>1</sup> and tomorrow that of my departure from it. Many are the mercies I have to be thankfull for through all my peregrinations. All the painfull scenes I have passed through, has been the temporary separation from my Friends. Fatigue either of Body or Mind I scarcely name amongst them, for I have my pleasures and gratifications which I set down as a balance to them. Cousin Lucy<sup>2</sup> has told you that I left Home about 8 o'clock. We proceeded to Man's Inn<sup>3</sup> in Wrentham before we stopped—27 miles—where we dined upon roast veal, roast chickings, salad &c., West Indian sweet meats I ought not to forget in the desert. It is really a very good Inn. We set off at three o'clock and reached Attleborough about five where we rested. I met with Mr. and Mrs. Mason<sup>4</sup> and Miss Newel<sup>5</sup> going to Newport. We passed an agreeable Hour together. At six we renewed our journey and reached Providence at

<sup>1</sup> June 19, 1788, Mrs. Adams landed in Boston, Massachusetts, on her return from England. Abigail (Smith) Adams, (November 11, 1744 — October 28, 1818) was the daughter of the Reverend William and Elizabeth (Quincy) Smith of Weymouth, Massachusetts. She married (October 25, 1764) John Adams, (October 19, 1735 — July 4, 1826) first Vice-President (1789-97) and second President of the United States (1797-1801), son of John and Susanna (Boylston) Adams. They had five children: John Quincy, (sixth President of the United States), Thomas, Charles, Abby, and Susanna who died young.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Lucy (Hubbard) Adams, wife of John Adams of Lincoln, cousin of her husband, John Adams, of Quincy.

<sup>3</sup> David Man of Wrentham was an innholder as early as 1724, and gave his name to the Inn.

<sup>4</sup> Probably Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Mason of Newport; he was a well-known merchant of that city.

<sup>5</sup> Possibly a sister of Timothy Newel who was living in Newport at that time. He married Margaret ....., on February 10, ..... in Newport. (Vital Records, Newport County).

half after Seven. We put up at Daggett's Inn<sup>6</sup> just at the entrance of the Town situated upon a Hill opposite the State House<sup>7</sup> commanding a fine view of the river & whole Town. We are tolerably well accomodated, but should have been much better if the Governour<sup>8</sup> had not taken the best Chamber before I came (court being now in Session) and he has not had the politness either to offer to give it up or to make me a visit, though he has had much conversation with Polly<sup>9</sup> and now & then takes a peep at me from the entry. My first inquiry was after a packet. I found only [Captain] Brown's here. He came and I like him. He has a very good packet<sup>10</sup> & bears a good character himself, but says he cannot be ready to Sail till Saturday morning. The wind today is directly against us.

In about an hour after my arrival I received the visits of the following persons — Mr. & Mrs. Arnold,<sup>11</sup> the Gentleman was one of the Committee who came to Mr.

<sup>6</sup>Daggett's Inn, was the Mansion House, sometimes called the Golden Ball Inn on Benefit Street across from the Old State House, now razed (1941). Washington stopped there in 1796. The candlesticks which were used at Hackers Hall at the ball in honor of Washington during his visit are in the Rhode Island Historical Society.

<sup>7</sup>The State House is still standing on North Main Street, now the Sixth District Court.

<sup>8</sup>Governor John Collins of Newport, leader of the party which refused to ratify the Constitution.

<sup>9</sup>Probably Mary or Maria "Polly" Jefferson (1773-1823) daughter of Thomas Jefferson, later Mrs. Eppes, first wife of her cousin John Wayles Eppes of Virginia. Other letters of this period mention "Polly" Jefferson and it is presumed that she was travelling home from the Convent in France, where she had been sent to be educated some years back. "Polly" was "under Mrs. Adams' wing" while she was abroad. (see *Letters of Mrs. Adams, the wife of John Adams*, by Charles Francis Adams.)

<sup>10</sup>Sloop Hancock, Capt. Brown, which sailed on the 20th for New York according to an item in *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, published in Providence, June 20, 1789. The packet was back in Providence, July 4th.

<sup>11</sup>Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Arnold of Newport.

Adams from the Town of Newport & Providence. Mr. & Mrs. Francis<sup>12</sup> this Lady is the daughter of Mr. John Brown of this Town, so celebrated for his Wealth. Miss Bowen<sup>13</sup> the Sister to the late Governour. Col. Peck.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Robins,<sup>15</sup> Tutor to the College & Mr. Shrimpton Hutchinson<sup>16</sup> and Mrs. [Joseph] Nightingale, all of whom in the name of many other Gentlemen and Ladies regretted that I had disappointed them in not letting it be known when I should be here as they had agreed to meet me several miles out of Town. Mr. and Mrs. Francis invited me to take up my abode with them. I excused myself, but have promised to take Tea & spend the Evening if I do not go out of Town. This morning I am to take a ride with them to see the Town & to return my visits, if I am not prevented by company, but my wish is not to be detained a moment. Pray write me & let me know by the next post whether my furniture is all on Board Barnard<sup>17</sup> & when he will Sail. I should be glad to hear how Mrs. Bri[er]sler<sup>18</sup> is. I left her in great affliction.

<sup>12</sup> Mr. and Mrs. John Francis. Mrs. Francis was Abby Brown, a daughter of John Brown, silhouette on cover.

<sup>13</sup> Probably Miss Mary Bowen, own sister of Governor Jabez Bowen. He also had two half sisters, Elizabeth (Betsey), and Nancy.

<sup>14</sup> Colonel George Peck, was a Lieutenant-Colonel, and Commandant of the Second Regiment of Militia in the County of Providence, R. I., in 1781, according to the *Rhode Island Colonial Records*, Volume IX. He was "Marshal of the District" according to Smith's *Civil and Military Lists*, Volume I.

<sup>15</sup> Mr. Asher Robins (Yale, 1782) was tutor at Brown University under President Manning.

<sup>16</sup> Mr. Shrimpton Hutchinson, son of William and Elizabeth Hutchinson. The *Providence Gazette* of November 30, 1811 recorded his death as "the venerable Shrimpton Hutchinson," late of Boston, died at Brooklyn, Conn., aged 93 years. Mrs. Nightingale, wife of Col. Joseph Nightingale, lived in the house across Power St., now owned by John Nicholas Brown.

<sup>17</sup> Captain Moses Barnard, master of the ship *Lydia* out of Boston.

<sup>18</sup> Mrs. John Briesler was the wife of the Adams' manservant. She suffered a great deal with a stomach ailment.

I feel the want of Mrs. Bri[e]sler as a Hair draper, on other accounts Polly does very well. Matilda is well, & her finger much better. Let Mrs. Storer<sup>19</sup> know, if you please. My best Regards to all my Dear Friends. It grieved me to see you so dull, you used to keep up your Spirits better. Do not let them flagg. A merry Heart does good like a medicine. We shall hear often from one another, and the separation be rendered less painfull by that means.

This moment a Card is brought me from Mr. [John] Brown & Lady with an invitation to dine with them today & that they will visit me at ten. I accept it, as [Captain] Brown cannot go till tomorrow. Adieu my dear sister most

Affectionarely yours  
Abigail Adams.

---

Richmond Hill,<sup>20</sup> June 28, 1789

My dear sister

I wrote you from Providence some account of my polite reception there & closed my letter just as I had accepted an invitation to dine with Mr. Brown & Lady. The forenoon was passed in receiving visits from all the principal Gentlemen and Ladies of the Town, who seemed to vie with each other, to convince me that though they were inhabitants of an Antifederal State,<sup>21</sup> they were themselves totally against the measures pursued by it, and that they enter-

<sup>19</sup>Mrs. Storer (1738-1826) was born Hannah Quincy, daughter of Josiah Quincy and married as her second husband Ebenezer Storer. John Adams courted her before he finally married Abigail Smith, see D. M. Wilson's, *When Independence Began* (Boston, 1902), pp. 72, 170.

<sup>20</sup>Richmond Hill was the house which stood "about a mile outside New York . . . on a hill — Richmond Hill — at the end of an avenue threaded with forest trees and luxuriant shrubberies" (see Dorothy Bobbe *Abigail Adams. The Second First Lady* (New York, 1929), now part of Greenwich Village, which was occupied by the Adams family while the Government had its seat in New York City in 1789.

<sup>21</sup>Rhode Island did not adopt the Constitution until May 1790, and Mrs. Adams was staunch Federalist, like her husband.



JOHN FRANCIS (1763-96)

HUSBAND OF ABBY (BROWN) FRANCIS AND FATHER OF JOHN  
BROWN FRANCIS, GOVERNOR OF RHODE ISLAND (1833-38).

*Silhouette made in London. Courtesy of Mrs. Maurice K. Washburn*



tained the highest regard and respect for the character [her husband] with which I was so intimately connected, although to their great mortification they had been prevented the Honour of having any share in placing him in his respected Station.

Mr. Brown sent his carriage & son [James] to conduct me [to] his House which is one of the grandest I have seen in this Country. Every thing in and about it, wore the marks of magnificence & taste. Mrs. Brown met me at the door & with the most obliging Smile accosted me with "Friend I am glad to see thee here." The simplicity of her manners & dress with openness of her countenance & the friendliness of her behaviour charmed me beyond all the studied politeness of European manners. They had collected between 22 persons to dine with me though the notice was so short, & gave an elegant entertainment upon a service of plate. Towards evening I made a Tour around the Town, & drank Tea & spent the evening with Mr. & Mrs. Francis whom I mentioned to you before. Here the company was much enlarged, & many persons introduced to me who had no opportunity before of visiting me. Amongst those Ladies, with whom I was most pleased was the Lady and two Sisters of Governour Bowen. About Eleven I returned to my lodgings and the next morning went on board the Hancock packet. We had contrary wind all day, by which means we did not reach Newport until seven o'clock. I had been only a few moments arrived when Mr. Merchant<sup>22</sup> came on board and insisted that I with my whole Family should go on shore & Lodge at his House, he would take no refusal. He sent his Daughter down to receive & accompany my niece, & came himself in a few moments with a carriage to attend me. At his House I was kindly & Hospitably treated by his Lady & daughters. We slept there & the next morning were early summoned on board the

<sup>22</sup>Mr. Henry Marchant (1741-96), prominent attorney of Newport, Member of Congress (1777-80, 1783-84), Judge, U. S. District Court (1790-96).

packet. Captain Brown had very civilly taken his wife to attend upon me & accomodate me during my passage. I found her a very well bred genteel woman, but neither civility, attention or politeness could remedy the sea sickness or give me a fair wind or dispell the Thunder gusts which attended us both night & day. In short I resolved upon what I have frequently before, that I would never again embark upon the water, but this resolution I presume will be kept as my former ones have been. We were five days upon the water. Heat, want of rest, sea sickness & terror, for I had my share of that, all contributed to fatigue me and I felt upon my arrivel quite tame & spiritless. . . .

Remember me affectionately to all my Friends, particularly my aged parent, to my children to whom I cannot write as yet, to my Dear Lucy<sup>23</sup> & worthy Dr. Tufts, in short to all whom I love

Yours most tenderly

A. Adams

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*The Providence Gazette and Country Journal*<sup>24</sup>

Saturday, June 20, 1789

Thursday Afternoon the Lady and Son of his Excellency the Vice-President of the United States arrived here from Boston, and this Day sail for New-York in the Hancock Packet, Capt. Brown. On their arrival here they were visited by a Number of Ladies and Gentlemen of the Town, and Yesterday dined with a large Company at the House of John Brown, Esq: every attention being paid them which the Shortness of their Stay would admit.

<sup>23</sup> Lucy (Quincy) Tufts, wife of Dr. Cotton Tufts. Dr. Tufts was a member of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and a member of the joint Committee to congratulate the President of the United States on his appointment, see the *United States Chronicle*, June 18, 1789.

<sup>24</sup> A complete file of *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal* and of the *United States Chronicle* are to be found in the collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

## The Gilbert Stuart House

by CAROLINE HAZARD\*

Every continent has its great rivers, whose very names bring the history of the world to mind. The Ganges, the Nile, and the Tiber make the connection from the beginning to the present. In our own country, we have the vastness of the Mississippi and the Rio Grande stretching into a wilderness which still keeps its secrets.

But there are lesser streams we should know in our own vicinity and our own State. It is a time to remember that there are

“Books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones and good in everything”

Such a brook is the Mettatoxet in southern Rhode Island having its source in a silver lake, which seems to be on top of a hill, after the curious manner of the waters of the Lake Country of Matunuck. Then it runs down into Pettaquams-

\*Caroline Hazard, (born 1856) had her first book published by Houghton & Mifflin in 1886, a life of J. Lewis Diman, Professor of History in Brown University. From his lectures to a class of girls over a period of years she derived her love of world history and our own special share in it. Her next book was *Narragansett Ballads*, closely followed by *College Tom a study of Life in Narragansett* published in 1893. *The Narragansett Friends Meeting* came in 1899 when Brown University conferred a degree of Litt. D. upon her. Eleven years as President of Wellesley College gave her even wider interests, with membership in many societies, including an honorary Phi Beta Kappa, which was installed at Wellesley during her presidency. More books followed till she has now about twenty to her credit. But first and foremost she is a loyal Rhode Islander, emphasizing Rhode Island's gift to the nation in Roger Williams' doctrine of freedom of conscience, and of late years devoting much time to the added gift of beauty in the Gilbert Stuart heritage.

Miss Hazard is the recipient of many honorary degrees: M.A. hon. (Michigan) 1899; Lit. D. (Brown) 1899; LL.D. (Tufts) 1905; LL.D. (Wellesley) 1925; Lit.D. (Mills) 1931; LL.D. (R. I. State) 1942.

cut Lake and joining the river of that name, also called Narrow River, meanders through tidal marshes to reach the sea.

The "book" which is in this "running brook" is the history of civilization in the new world. The first date is 1662 when its waters were dammed, and set to work for the first necessity of the new arrivals on its shore, grinding the corn the Indians taught them to raise for food.

In 1686 Thomas Mumford agreed to build a grist mill, and added a fulling mill, to perfect the hand spun and woven cloth which the women made. So the little stream provided both food and clothing, and a saw mill to make the boards for housing men thus fed and clothed was built.

The new colony prospered, and it was time to think of expansion. Dr. Thomas Moffat, a physician of Newport, saw the large consumption of snuff, which had to be imported from England, made from Sir Walter Raleigh's discovery of tobacco in America. With the energy of a pioneer, and the thrift of a Scot, he determined to start an infant industry, from Rhode Island grown tobacco. So he imported a snuff grinder from Glasgow, who promptly married a very beautiful American woman, Elizabeth Anthony, granddaughter of John Anthony from whom Bishop Berkeley had bought Whitehall.

That snuff grinder was Gilbert Stuart and the stream saw the arrival in 1751 of the married couple to the "small dwelling house, grist mill, and saw mill", the old deed states. Here two children were born and duly christened and "April 11th being Palm Sunday, Dr. McSparran preached and baptized at St. Paul's Narragansett, two children one named Gilbert Stewart, son of Gilbert Stewart ye snuff grinder".

Here the child grew and prospered, later to go to Newport where Cosmo Alexander recognized his talent, then to Glasgow, back to America, and in 1775 he sailed again for England to begin his famous career under Benjamin West.

What Dr. Moffat considered the "Genteel Occupation" of making snuff did not last very long. The Revolution came; Moffat was burned in effigy as a royalist and the State took over his property about 1780. It passed through several hands till in 1813 Benjamin Hammond acquired it and made the Grist Mill famous for its fine meal, ground on stones already old.

The house and lands had various owners. Fifty years ago efforts were made to acquire the place for preservation, but titles were conflicting. A more decided effort was made by Nathaniel N. Vose in 1927 and in 1930 stimulated by a lecture before the South County Art Club by Prof. Herbert



FIRE PLACE, GILBERT STUART HOUSE

R. Cross on the works of Gilbert Stuart, the first thousand dollars toward its purchase was promised. A committee was formed of which Miss Caroline Hazard was the chairman and by September the purchase, through Mr. Vose's negotiations, was made from the owner Mrs. Hazel Green Henninger.

The legislature of 1931 passed an act of incorporation and the Gilbert Stuart Memorial Association began its work under the expert direction of Norman M. Isham. The gambrel-roofed house was made safe, chimney rebuilt, foundations strengthened. That same year came the

offer from England of a snuff mill, of the kind Gilbert Stuart used, by Counsellor A. Harland of Sheffield. A mill wheel eighteen inches wide and fifteen feet in diameter was built just the size of the old one whose remnants were found, and the snuff mill safely installed. The water of the Mettatoxet was turned on with appropriate ceremony before a large company of friends June 11, 1932. The shed was added to and became the keeper's lodge, and the house restored to its old lines by Mr. Isham.

In 1939 a gathering of friends witnessed the unveiling of a tablet which reads

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE  
OF  
NORMAN M. ISHAM  
IN THE RESTORATION OF THIS HOUSE  
FREELY PRESENTED IS GRATEFULLY RECORDED  
BY THE TRUSTEES  
1939

Mr. Isham was happily surprised and the Trustees happy to acknowledge his great service in directing the work.

The grist mill remained a problem, but the hurricane settled that, for it was evident it would fall to pieces. So hand sawed boards were secured, again under Mr. Isham's direction, wide boards, just like the old, and the old mill taken down and rebuilt. The great stones for grinding had to be reset. When they saw the light there plainly cut was the date—1759—on the upper stone. They are now in place. If some day the sluice can be rebuilt then they too can have the water from the stream for power.

So the book which is in this running brook finishes a chapter. Its power supplied food, and clothing and shelter, the primitive needs of man. Then came what was considered an agreeable euphoric, and crowning it all its waters lulled an infant, born beside them, for the capture and preservation of beauty whose famous work has become a national inspiration.

ORDER OF EXERCISES  
AT THE  
CEREMONIES ATTENDANT UPON THE OCCASION  
OF THE *Celebration* OF THE  
200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTHDAY  
OF  
GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE



ON THE TERRACE OF THE JOHN BROWN HOUSE  
HOME OF THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FIFTY-TWO POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

*at three in the afternoon*

Friday, August Seventh

NINETEEN HUNDRED *and* FORTY-TWO

INVOCATION . . . . . Right Reverend James DeWolf Perry  
*Bishop of Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island*

LENTO AND AIR GAI from *Iphigenie in Aulis* . . . Gluck (1714-1787)

ORCHESTRA

GREETINGS OF THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE . Mayor Dennis J. Roberts

THE YOUTH OF GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE,  
 United States Senator Theodore Francis Green

ARIAS

"How fair are these meadows" from "Orpheus" . . . Gluck

"Come scoglio" from "Cosi fan tutte" . . . Mozart (1756-1791)

MISS EMMA BELDAN

GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WAR  
 OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE . . . William Greene Roelker  
*Director and Librarian of the Rhode Island Historical Society*

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC . . (from Library of Congress manuscripts)

Minuet and Gavotte . . . Alexander Reinagle (1756-1809)

Washington's March . . . Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791)  
*first native born American composer — signer of Declaration of Independence*

ORCHESTRA



ORDER OF EXERCISES

111

Hail, Columbia! . . . . . *Philip Phile* (d. 1793)

*Music originally named "The President's March" written about 1771.*

*Poem written for Phile's music by Joseph Hopkinson in 1798.*

MISS EMMA BELDAN

GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE,

Honorable J. Howard McGrath, Governor

BENEDICTION . . . . . The Reverend Thomas C. Collins

*Chancellor of the Providence Diocese*

THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER . . . . . *Key-Smith*

MISS EMMA BELDAN

HONOR GUARD, KENTISH GUARDS, R.I.M.,

Colonel Thomas Casey Greene, *Commanding*

RHODE ISLAND WPA ORCHESTRA

STEPHEN FARNUM, *Conductor*

EMMA BELDAN, *Soprano*

*Assisting Artist*

COMMITTEE

WILLIAM GREENE ROELKER, *Chairman*

HONORABLE JOHN B. NOLAN, *Vice-Chairman*

HONORABLE JOHN H. GREENE, JR.

HONORABLE GEORGE ROCHE

MISS GRACE M. SHERWOOD, *Secretary*

EXHIBIT

Portraits, Objects and Manuscripts relating to General Nathanael Greene  
on exhibition at the Rhode Island Historical Society

## The Youth of General Greene

by THEODORE FRANCIS GREEN\*

Engrossed, as we are, in a world-wide war to defend our American way of life and liberty throughout the world, it is appropriate to direct our attention to what our forefathers did to win that liberty we are now called upon to defend. So we are celebrating here today the 200th anniversary of an event of great importance in the history of our country. This event was the birth of the first son and namesake to the Quaker Nathanael Greene and his wife in the old homestead at Potowomut, Rhode Island. How unlikely it seemed at that time that this event would have any bearing on our national development, and on our international relations. At that time, people had been reading about the war between England and Spain, and the possibility of a war between England and France, but who could then have foreseen a war between England and the American Colonies, and even if that war had been foreseen, who would have imagined that this little boy would have had one of the leading roles in it!

Brought up in this old homestead, like his three younger brothers, to have a share in the prosperous family business which included the administration of forges, anchor mills, grist mills and saw mills at various places in the Colony, it seemed unlikely that he would show the spirit of adventure. Brought up on the Quaker principles of hatred of war, it was unlikely that he would make a national reputation as a warrior. His outlook into the future showed merely the prospect of a long business life leading to substantial success according to the standard of an old respectable, well-to-do family in a quiet, provincial town and it showed nothing more. He was brought up under the strict discipline and

\*Theodore Francis Green—A.B., (Brown) 1887, A.M., 1890; LL.B., (Harvard) 1892; Governor, State of Rhode Island (1933-37); U. S. Senator (1937-).

cold repression of a father whom he loved and respected, but whose natural impulses and views of life were so different from his own that there could have been but little sympathy between them. Both were high-minded, honorable and conscientious; both were men of strong and determined character and of clear and independent mind; but what a contrast! The father austere, bigoted, unsympathetic, self-sufficient; the son joyous, open-minded, sympathetic, a lover of his fellow-men and beloved by them, finding joy in their society and sustaining strength in their intelligent commendation.

His education so far as schooling went was limited. He often regretted the fact that he was unable to go to college, but Rhode Island College, which afterwards became Brown University, was not founded until too late for him to attend there. He took an almost pathetic interest in its success and had among his most intimate younger friends its early graduates, and in 1776 he received from the college one of the two honorary degrees conferred that year. However, he made every effort to educate himself, studied a large part of his free time and gradually acquired a library of some 250 volumes carefully selected for his own use. The extraordinary amount of painstaking detail in his efforts to improve himself, made many a difficult task of his later life seem easy to the observer who knew nothing of those long years of persistent work and unconscious preparation.

I will leave it to other speakers to dilate on his inconspicuous record as a Deputy in the General Assembly and on his most conspicuous service in the Continental Army, and will single out an incident in his life which illustrates the qualities of his character worthy of our particular attention. As he grew to manhood those were troubled times for this little colony of Rhode Island. The breach became wider and wider between the mother country and the various colonies, but nowhere did the love of civil liberty manifest itself more clearly, and nowhere was it incorporated

into deeds earlier than here in Rhode Island the birthplace of religious liberty. It was *our* General Assembly which adopted the first resolution denying the right of any other power to levy taxes upon the colony. *Our* governor was the only one who refused to take oath to support the Stamp Act. *Our* citizens committed the first overt act of violence by destroying the British sloop *Liberty*, at Newport. *Our* citizens occasioned the first bloodshed by burning the British schooner *Gaspee* at Providence.

Greene's soul had for some years been deeply stirred by the current of events, and his clear insight had led him to the conviction that the parting of the ways was near, that an appeal to arms was probable, if not inevitable, and that his duty was that of preparation. He read diligently all the military works he could procure. He attended some military drills across the border in Connecticut, and thus brought upon himself a remonstrance from the Society of Friends. He decided as a true patriot that the religious and political liberty on which this colony was founded, must be made secure, and that nothing else mattered. After due consideration he announced his calm decision to abide by his actions even should they lead to his exclusion from the Society of Friends. And after equal consideration the society announced its calm decision to exclude him.

In 1774 the colony was busying itself with martial matters. Military companies were being organized and chartered right and left, the Pawtuxet Rangers, the Gloucester Light Infantry, the Providence Train of Artillery, the Providence Fusileers and many more. Among these was the Kentish Guards in East Greenwich, Warwick and Coventry, whose members are acting as Guard of Honor here today. Greene had exerted himself to form this company, and its members were chiefly his friends and acquaintances. Among the thirty-seven original charter members ten bore the name of Greene. His friends had suggested that he should be one of the lieutenants, and Greene will-

ingly acquiesced, only to find his candidacy opposed, the excuse being that he limped slightly. The mortification to Greene was great, and his friend Varnum, who had been suggested as captain, threatened to abandon the company. The control which Greene had acquired over his naturally quick temper was never shown better than when he persuaded Varnum to remain. The afternoon of the same day he wrote Varnum a long letter, explaining his position in the matter, a letter so dignified in expression, so noble and so patriotic in sentiment, that I venture to quote a few sentences. He wrote,

" \* \* \* I never expected that being a member of the company would give me any more consequence in life either as a private soldier or commissioned officer. I thought the cause of liberty was in danger, and as it was attacked by a military force it was necessary to cultivate a military spirit among the people. . . .

"I have pleased myself with the thought of serving under you, but as it is the general opinion that I am unfit for such an undertaking, I shall desist. I feel not the less inclination to promote the good of the company. . . ."

And he closed with assurances of his earnest support. The matter ended by his remaining a private.

On May 22nd, 1775, (a month after the fight at Lexington) the assembly voted to raise an "Army of Observation" of 1,500 men, and shortly after the officers were chosen by the two houses in a Grand Committee, and "Nathanael Greene, Jr., Esq.," was chosen brigadier-general. The man who within two weeks had marched as a private through the streets of Providence with a musket on his shoulder; the man to whom not six months before the fellow members of his company had objected as not being fit to be their lieutenant; this young man thirty-two years old was elevated to the command of the colony's army. And why? Was it, as some have stated, owing to the intervention of a kind Providence? If so, we may still ask; what human agencies

were employed? Was it, as others have stated, owing to a great, popular demand? He had had no opportunity to prove his abilities before the public. The *Providence Gazette*, one of the two newspapers in the colony, does not even mention his name, during the two months prior to his election.

Greene's talents, his attainments, his character, his mind were such as are not readily appreciated by the unthinking crowd, and such as do not invite popular attention. They were, however, such as to make a deep impression upon the intelligent and discriminating few, with whom he came into personal contact. These had the opportunity to measure his mastery of facts, to estimate his mental powers, to test his public spirit, and to prove his absolute sincerity and singleness of purpose. He had met under fortunate circumstances most of the men of ability and influence in the colony, and one of the chief of those was Samuel Ward, the father of his most intimate friend and the uncle of his wife. No one had better opportunities of appreciating Greene's abilities, or better reasons for being interested in his success. May we not suppose that it was Ward who first was himself convinced, and then persuaded the members of the General Assembly (all of whom knew, liked and respected Greene) that here was the man to whom could most safely be intrusted the command of the little army of Rhode Island? In a grave crisis timid hearts give way before brave hearts, little minds bow down before great minds, and a few men of ability and sincere conviction can impose their will upon the multitude. Greene had won the respect and confidence of such men by the strong traits of character developed in his early manhood, and, though experience and technical skill and opportunity needed yet to be added before his greatness should be recognized, the man's character was already completely formed, ready to cope with the difficulties, defeats and disappointments which were to precede his last, glorious, southern campaign.

To defend with arms the principles of religious and political liberty, which were dearer to him than life itself, Greene broke with the Society of Friends and his own family and thus was true to his convictions. Let us show the same spirit now, so far as it may become necessary! As the winning of the Revolutionary War was to him, so let the winning of this war be to us, the chief aim of life. Let us realize as he did that nothing else matters!



GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE

*Miniature by John Trumbull**Courtesy of Mrs. Anna Clarke Meader*



## General Nathanael Greene's Contributions to the War of American Independence

by WILLIAM GREENE ROELKER

Fundamentally a peaceful nation, the United States has produced but few first-class military men. In the Civil War, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Sherman and Grant; in the Revolution, Washington and Nathanael Greene. Each of these men — except Greene — had been in actual command of troops, or had attended a military academy like West Point, before becoming a general officer. Greene, alone, had had no previous military training except as a private in the Kentish Guards — and no field experience whatever.

It is little short of remarkable that a man — self-educated as Senator Green has so vividly explained — was able to become a general officer, almost over night. Greene not only took a leading position at the outset of the war at Boston, but he maintained his standing. Washington and Greene were the only two generals in continuous service throughout the seven years of conflict.

What were the qualities which enabled this self-educated young man — he was only 33 at the outbreak of hostilities — to take and hold such a leading position?

First, Greene had an orderly, analytical mind, capable of quick decision — “I decide in a minute,” he said of himself, and, secondly, a great ability to express his ideas, simply, forcefully and lucidly, both in speech and on paper.

The American War of Independence was a leisurely war, and a verbose war. Most of the participants had a pretty good education; all of them had time to write upon every occasion. It was also a “holy war” and every word written by Patriot or Tory was religiously preserved, as it should have been. In all this mountainous mass of correspondence Greene's letters stand out, sharp and crystal clear; they



compare not unfavorably with the expositions of the recognized masters, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin.

It was this ability to grasp the issues, select the essentials of success and then express them in a way to influence others, which was Nathanael Greene's first contribution to the success of the War of Independence.

As early as December 20, 1775, Greene wrote his brother Jacob: "George the Third's last speech has shut the door of hope for reconciliation. . . . We must submit unconditionally, or defend ourselves. . . . We are now driven to the necessity of making a declaration of independence." A careful historian says this is "perhaps the first use of a term now so common and so famous."<sup>1</sup>

Greene was equally clear in his conception of the steps necessary to achieve independence. His letters to former Governor Samuel Ward, a delegate from Rhode Island to the Continental Congress, advance a program for the army which would have shortened the war and immeasurably reduced its cost, had it been possible to persuade the Congress to adopt it from the beginning.

This program, which Greene continued to advocate throughout the war, called for an army enlisted for the duration, well equipped, fed and paid, properly disciplined by officers likewise adequately and regularly paid and assured of some form of pension after the cessation of fighting.

"If the Congress wish to put the finishing stroke to this war," he wrote Ward, "they must exert their whole force at once, and give every measure an air of decision. I pray God we may not lose the critical moment, Human affairs are ever like the tide, constantly on the ebb and flow. Our preparations in all parts of the United Colonies ought to be so great as to leave no room to doubt our intentions to support the cause and obtain our conditions."

"I am confident the force of America, if properly exerted, will prove superior to all her enemies, but I would

<sup>1</sup>Allen French, *The First Year of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1934), 594.

risk nothing to chance," he wrote John Adams and to Governor Nicholas Cooke: "Our men are good; nothing is wanting but officers and discipline to make the American troops equal to any in the world."

Though the Congress paid but scant attention to his suggestions that does not detract from his contribution. The continuous expression of these same ideas soon won him the confidence of George Washington, recently appointed Commander in Chief.

Greene's second contribution was the reorganization of the service of supply, known in those days as the Quartermaster-General's Department.

A bare-headed, half-naked sentinel standing in the snow with his bare bleeding feet in his hat to save them from freezing, is a poignant symbol of the miseries of the Grand Continental Army at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78.

"For some days past," wrote Washington, "there has been little less than a famine in camp. A part of the army has been a week without any kind of flesh" and numbers of horses have actually died from pure want. The demands of an army were simpler then, but then it was just as essential to provide horses with fodder as now it is to supply tanks and planes with gasoline. Nor has there been any change in the human anatomy which enables it to fight without food.

Much against his inclination — "I hate the place," he wrote Knox — and only at the insistence of the committee of Congress and the Commander-in-Chief, Greene finally consented to attack the apparently unsurmountable difficulties of supplying the army with food, clothing and transportation. His years of experience in managing the family forges and grist mills stood him in good stead and three months after he assumed the post the army moved with "ease and facility" from Valley Forge in pursuit of General Clinton who had evacuated Philadelphia. There followed the battle of Monmouth, June 28, 1778, the first

general engagement in which Washington's Grand Army had not been defeated.

Much of the credit is generally given — and undoubtedly belongs — to drill-master Baron von Steuben who had injected some discipline into the ranks. But no matter how well-trained the army might have been it could not have moved from Valley Forge without the supplies and transportation provided by Quartermaster-General Greene.

Surrounded as we are today by the resounding din about the difficulties of the service of supply—supplies to Russia, tanks to Egypt and ships for a second front — we can understand Greene's problems, minute though they seem in contrast with the requirements of a global war. But there is one factor we are not yet familiar with — though it may be just around the corner — Greene called it "depreciation of the currency," we call it "inflation."

Quartermaster-General Greene had to pay for his supplies in paper or orders on the loan office — when the seller would accept them — the British paid in gold. This was handicap enough in itself, but in addition Continental money kept depreciating until "Not worth a Continental" became a synonym for worthlessness. By May, 1779, a hat cost \$400, a suit of clothes \$1600, and everything else in proportion.

Since our present situation is pregnant with the same possibilities it may profit us to note Greene's remedy: "The great influx of money has produced a prodigious depreciation. Nothing will produce a radical cure, but taxation," he wrote his kinsman, Governor William Greene, Oct. 8, 1779. "It is in vain to think to carry on an expensive war, without burdening the people. . . . We may rack our invention time out of mind, in search of new expedients, to defray our expenses; but they will all be as fruitless as to attempt to live upon the air."

We come now to the southern campaign of 1780-81, Greene's third contribution to the success of the war.

In many ways the moment in December when he assumed command, seemed to be the low point in a war replete with depressions. The French fleet and troops of which so much had been expected, were bottled up in Newport by the British blockade; the value of Continental money had reached the vanishing point and there was no credit; Washington's forces were depleted and disaffected; Gates and the militia had recently run away from the British at Camden, S. C.; the treason of Benedict Arnold had been discovered and he had fled to the enemy. The game seemed to be nearly up.

But during the winter conditions went from bad to worse, and in April we find Washington writing to John Laurens whom he had sent to France to ask for more help: "We are at the end of our tether. . . . Now or never help must come. . . ."

Meanwhile at the south Greene's campaign had turned the tide, though it was not yet apparent to the Commander in Chief at the north. Soon after his taking command he wrote Congress: "The small force [under my immediate command] are so naked of everything that the greater part is rendered unfit for any kind of duty. The officers have reported them as incapable of attending the parade for discipline, the want of which was never greater in any Army." "We have but very incompetent supplies." "And the spirit of plundering which prevails among the inhabitants adds not a little to our difficulties. The whole country is in danger of being laid waste by the whigs and Tories who pursue each other with as much relentless fury as beasts of prey. People between this and the Santee [river] are frequently murdered as they ride along the roads. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

With such an army and under the conditions described Greene campaigned steadily for nine months — for seven of them he did not have a chance to take off his clothes.

<sup>2</sup>From Greene's Letter to Congress, Dec. 28, 1780, courtesy of the W. L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan. . .

Always outnumbered, with no supplies except what he could raise from the country, he lost every battle but gained every objective for which he risked the engagement. By September 1781 he had redeemed all of the interior of Georgia, North and South Carolina, leaving the British only in possession of the three seaports where the guns of the fleet protected them.

To borrow a phrase from the sports page, Greene's campaign sparked the whole American army into activity and less than two months later Lord Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, October 18, 1781, virtually bringing to an end the War of Independence.

In the last analysis, Greene's greatest contribution to the war was the confidence Washington came to have in the ability and judgment of his loyal subordinate. Washington was a great moral force, but a somewhat hesitant and fumbling executive. As Emerson wrote: "We cannot find the smallest part of the personal weight of Washington in the narrative of his exploits." But he could and did make use of the practical Greene.

It has long been my opinion that Greene's character and accomplishments have been overshadowed by the legendary Washington, though I have no intention to derogate that great man. The controversial figure of Gates, the able, active Arnold (the traitor) and the character of many others is sharply etched by reason of their differences and contests with Washington. By a seeming paradox, Greene's continued loyalty and support has been a handicap to his reputation.

A little known incident reveals this loyalty.

Washington, as everyone knows, was subject to sharp outbursts of temper. One of these cost him the friendship and services of Alexander Hamilton. At an earlier date he had sharply rebuked Greene who kept his temper and answered in a letter which will better focus the relationship of the two men than any words of mine. I quote in part:

"Your Excellency has made me very unhappy. I can submit patiently to deserved censure, but it wounds my feelings exceedingly to meet with a rebuke for doing what I conceived to be a proper part of my duty. . . .

"I can say with great truth that ever since I had the honor to serve under you I have been more attentive to the public interest, and more engaged in the support of your Excellency's character than ever I was to my own ease, interest, or reputation.

"I have never solicited you for a furlough to go home to indulge in pleasure or to improve my interest. . . . I have never confined myself to my particular line of duty. Neither have I ever spared myself either by night or day where it has been necessary to promote the public service under your direction. I have never been troublesome to your Excellency to publish anything to my advantage. . . .

"I am persuaded I have given too many unequivocal proofs of my attachment to your person and interest to leave a doubt upon your mind to the contrary.

"I have always given you my opinion with great candor, and executed your orders with equal fidelity. I do not mean to arrogate to myself more merit than I deserve, or wish to exculpate myself from being chargeable with error, and, in some cases, negligence. However I can speak with a becoming pride that I have always endeavored to deserve the public esteem and your Excellency's approbation.

"As I came into the Quartermaster's department with reluctance, so I shall leave it with pleasure. Your influence brought me in, and the want of your approbation will induce me to go out."

Washington replied the same day.

"White Plains, July 21, 1778.\*

Dear Sir:

I cannot at this time (having many People round me, and Letters by the Southern Post to read) go fully into the con-

\**The Writings of George Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. XII, 199-200.

tents of yours of this date, but with the same truth I have ever done, I still assure you, that you retain the same hold of my affections that I have professed to allow you. With equal truth I can, and do assure you, that I have ever been happy in your friendship, and have no scruples in declaring, that I think myself indebted to your Abilities, honour and candour, to your attachment to me, and your faithful Services to the Public, in every capacity you have served it since we have been together in the Army. But my dear Sir, these must not debar me the privileges of a friend (for it was the voice of friendship that spoke to you) when I complained of Neglect; I was four or five days without seeing a single person in your department, and at a time when I wished for you in two capacities, having business of the utmost importance to settle with the Count de Estaing (which made it necessary for me to see you as Qr. Mr. Genl. and) wch. kept me closely engaged at Haverstraw till the moment I crossed the No. R. But let me beseech you my dear Sir not to harbor any distrusts of my friendship, or conceive that I mean to wound the feelings of a Person whom I greatly esteem and regard. I speak to you freely. I speak the language of sincerity, and should be sorry if any jealousy should be entertained, as I shall ever say more (in matters of this kind) to you, than to others of you, being very truly,

Yr. Obedt. and Affecte

G. Washington"

Actions speak louder than words. Two years later Washington entrusted Greene with the command of the demoralized southern army, with the results we have seen.

I am sure that you will agree with me: that all Americans and we as Rhode Islanders, should ever be proud of the contributions made to the War of American Independence by our native son, General Nathanael Greene.



# A Rhode Islander Goes West to Indiana (1817-1818)

*Communicated by* GEORGE A. WHITE, JR.

*(Continued from Rhode Island History, Volume 1, No. 3, p. 90)*

Vigo County 6 July 1818

Dear Father

Yours of May 20 came safe to hand. Am glad to here that you had procured the money to meet my draft as I expect it has been presented before this time. The power of Attorney was found in a store at Vincennes where Mr Douglass dropped it. Judge Coleman was to find a purchaser but Mr D— was sent on here to settle the business and give a Deed— Jenckes lands on this Prairie are the E Half of Sec 4[,] E Half of 9 & NW Quater of Sec 10[,] all in Range 9 Township 11 which is  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the SW of 2 . . . He has a 30 Acre field on the NE Quater just by his house[,] an a 40 acre field fenced on the SE . . . He is driving on quite fast to put up a kitchen and two additions to his house before his father arrives. He has hired an extra hand for one month at 18 dols pr Month and wishes to hire two more hands but they are so scarce (it being about harvest time) that he cannot get them. I do not think he will be able to get in much wheet this fall except on the old ground where his corn is as he has not broak up any yet and if he does what he thinks of to the house he will not have much time to brake up. He does not approve of the manner of his Fathers comming out. He said D—[Daniel] was all for Dash and that they would wish their Coaches to the D—I before they got half way here but that they would persevere and come through as he would not have it said that He (Daniel) was beet in his calculations about traveling.

I have made some calculation of the expense of brakeing & fencing my land. The rails I think can be got out for  $87\frac{1}{2}$  cts pr hundred this winter and [the laborers to] find themselves. The price now is 75 cts and found. At  $87\frac{1}{2}$  for 6000 which is what is necessary to fence a Qr Section with what there is already and joining fence with Mr Dan<sup>l</sup> Brown on the west end will be \$52.25  
for Halling and putting up the same 1 dol pr hund 60.00  
Brakeing up 100 Acres of Prairie at 3.50 pr Acre 350.00  
Some say I cannot get Broak up under 4 dols but I  
think I can  
for building a cabbin..... 70.00

532.25



Jenckes cost about 80. There is a cabbin on the place 16 feet by 20 which was erected for a temporary affair but will do with some repairs. Boards are \$15 pr thousand.

Now the getting in of 50 acres of corn 50 do Wheat will cost say \$120.00 which is paying the highest price which added to the other makes \$652.25 for getting the crop in and building Cabbin. Now 50 acres of wheat at 20 bush pr Acre will be 1000 bush that is \$1000. 50 acres corn 25 bush pr Acre and  $37\frac{1}{2}$  cts pr bush will be \$468.25 which for the crop makes \$1468.25 cts. I think at a moderate calculation now taking the whole expence from it exclusive of the harvesting

1468.25

652.25

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\$816.00 over and above all expenses.

Yet to rent it out for the brakeing and fencing they must have it for 2 or 3 years with all they can raise.

Lands are rising very fast here[,] the emigration is so great. I am told the river is full of boats with families. Those that have land for sale keep rising on it every day. That which could be bought for 10 dols when I came on they now ask 12 to 15. They hold their lands so high that there are a great many that have come out to purchase cannot at their prices. Some have gone back in the woods and bought second handed[,] there not being any to enter that is good. There was 3 quarter sections sold last week of timber land 10 miles above T Haute for \$6.50 pr Acre—

Sam<sup>l</sup> Jacobs<sup>31</sup> was here last Saturday. He intends to bring some of his goods to TH and establish himself there. There are 2 stores there now and 3 or 4 more comming as soon as there is buildings sufficient to put their goods in. I rather think there will be more stores than purchasers and rents are very high. There is a small cabbin with but one room that I am told rents for 5 dols pr Month. There is 5 frame Buildings going

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Jacobs is apparently a son of Henry Jacobs of New York. He bought, from Judge Coleman, on August 11, 1818, Lot 95 in Terre Haute, and on December 7, 1818 sold it to Jacobs & Levy. Inasmuch as a record dated April 1, 1820 shows James Jacobs and Alexis LeRoy selling Lot 95 to Josias Pennington, the Levy is apparently an error. Samuel Jacob's sale to Jacobs & LeRoy ties in, however, with items in the Vincennes *Western Sun* for 1821-1823 which seem to indicate that Samuel Jacobs had moved to Vincennes. The *Sun* on October 27, 1821 reported that Samuel Jacobs had been elected cashier of the Bank of Vincennes on the preceding Thursday. On November 3, 1821 a news item reported that he had declined the appointment. On December 1, 1821, a Samuel Jacobs was elected a lieutenant colonel of the First Regiment Militia, and on February 1, 1823, his resignation from this post was reported in the newspaper. That Samuel Jacobs was in Vincennes by 1820 is shown by the census of that year for Knox County, which includes Vincennes. The census showed a Samuel Jacobs as head of a family consisting of two males between the ages of 26 and 45, one female in that age-group, and one female under 10; two were engaged in commerce.

up besides the CHouse at present and it is expected there will be more. The river is about 150 yards wide against T.H. and supplies are brought up in keels & flats. The river is deep and no obstruction untill about 20 miles below Vincennes at Palmyra where the Falls are which in low stage boats are obliged to take out part of the cargo to go over[;] but in common stage they go over [torn] There is no other obstruction untill 50 or 60 miles above.

The price of Shugar 25 cts[;] Country Loaf 50[;] no other to be had and no other Liquors but Whiskey. Tea 2 dols pr lb Coffe 50 cts Salt 3 dols pr bushel corn is 1.25 pr bush. 1 dol pr hand is the Freight from Vincennes. From Fort H to mouth of Wabash is 920 [?] miles by water.

The season has been very fine. Wheat is good[;] about fit to cut. The price will be 1.50 pr bushel. Corn looks well though seed was bad and planted 2 or 3 times over. It is very healthy I do not know of one person sick—there are but few sheep in the country[;] however they look pretty well. Grapes do well. Clover on the Prairie and timothy in the woods. There is not much got in yet as their attention has been to prepare for Wheat & Corn . . . they cradle here altogether as it does not grow high but heavy headed—What Potatoes will be next spring I do not know[;] there is a good many planted.

\* \* \* \*

Vigo County August 17<sup>th</sup> 1818

Dear Father

Yours of June 26th came safe to hand the first inst. I have neglected answering it before as we have been in expectation of Mr Jenckes arival ere this. It is very singular that my draft has not been presented. Mr Douglass informed me that he should go immediately to NYork as he took it in part pay.

We passed the 4 of July at the house of Taylor & Irish from Newport[;] a nephew of George Irish.<sup>32</sup> They have bought a Q section on Honey creek Prairie. There were 75 persons present. Had a very good dinner and in the evening a dance . . . if a person could get a family or two that understood making cheese and butter they would do well . . .

The season has been very fine[;] the most hot weather that I ever experienced. Wheat has come in well[;] corn looks well and the grass in many places as high as the horses backs.

Mellons grow here in great abundance and without any tending. We have the largest and best I ever saw & more than we can eat—We all have our health here very well none of us haveing been sick at all, though there are many cases of Fever & Fever & Ague which is mostly confined

<sup>32</sup> George Irish of Middletown represented that town in the General Assembly in 1823, and, in 1834 was nominated for lieutenant governor by the National-Republicans on the same ticket with Nehemiah Knight. They were defeated in a close election by John Brown Francis and Jeffrey Hazard.

to the new commers, and in town & at the Fort. There is scarcely a case back from the river on the E side of the Prairie . . .

Musquitoes have been very troublesome but they have left us but the flies are very numerous and severe on horses. They rise like a swarm of bees and cover the horses immediately. The Prairie fly is about the size of a honey bee and about the colour with green heads and there is another kind that keeps in the Woods very large. Jenckes and I measured one that was  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches across his wings and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in length— . .

Carpenters wages for master workman [are] 2 dols pr day[, ] common hands \$1.25 pr day. There is a good many here but more work for them than they can do—Blacksmiths work also comes high as they charge the same for work that Iron costs which is one shilling pr lb.

Sam<sup>l</sup> Jacobs has established himself in town. He sells his goods much more reasonable than the other two stores in town. Teas Young Hison 2 dols pr lb Hison 2.50 Imperial 3 shugars Loaf 50cts pr lb Muscovada 25 Coffee 50 Brandy Punch 5 dols pr gal wine Teneriffe 4 dols Whiskey 1 dollar and Cloths that in R. I. would be 5 dols they ask 7 for here pr yard. I bought me a pair panterloons the day before I recd. yours informing me you had sent a pair and a coat I must buy this week for mine is worn thread bare. The Tailor charges here six dollars for makeing coat 2.50 for panterloons[; ] shoes come at 3.50 and 3 dols pr pair.

There is a treaty about to be held with the Indians for the purchase of the rest of the Land in this state. They have pretty much all gone down to Vincennes for that purpose. We have just had a visit by his Excellency Jona. Jennings<sup>33</sup> who is so much pleased with this part of the State that he intends to move here if he can sell his estate in Clark County and can get one here—Remember me to all the family and believe me your dutifull Son

John

\* \* \* \*

Terre Haute Ina Sept 29 1818<sup>34</sup>

Dear Father

I wrote you on the 14th informing you of the death of our friend Mr Jenckes who died on the day before after a sickness of ten or twelve days since he first complained but was not confined to the house untill

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Jennings was the first governor of Indiana. Previously he had served as territorial delegate in Congress from 1809 to 1816, having been elected on an anti-slavery platform with strong support from the Quakers. He also presided at the convention at which the State Constitution was drawn up and adopted. Indiana became a State on December 11, 1816; Jennings served as governor until 1822, and then served four terms (1823-1831) as Congressman from Indiana. In every way he appears to have been Indiana's "first citizen" during the transition period from territory to statehood. He was born in 1784 in either Hunterdon County, N. J., or Rockbridge County, Va.; he died on July 26, 1834, at Charlestown, Indiana.

<sup>34</sup> This letter is preceded in the series by one devoted entirely to an account of the death of Colonel Jenckes.

2 days before his death and even the morning of the day on which he died he was able to move from one bed to another and could speak loud enough to be heard in another room when he wished for anything which was very seldom for he wished to be quiet by himself. He never complained of any thing except when he was first taken. He then said he was burning up inside but after that his fever left him and he never complained of any thing more and when John left here on Thursday we thought him on the recovery indeed[;] he was quite smart—I suspect he was not senceable of his situation himself or he would have mentioned something about his family for he could speak and had his senses to the last. He said nothing about them except once in the morning he enquired if John had returned which was all he said as I suppose he had no particular object in inquiring—

Mr Jenckes was very much pleased with their situation here. Indeed he said if it was in his power to ask for a place both for situation and quality of soil he should not dare to have it altered for fear of its proving worse for this was just the Thing. And was much pleased with my situation and said to farm it on it was worth more than one half of the R I farms with all their improvements—

John & Dan<sup>l</sup> intend to go on here as their plans were before their Fathers death except building which they will not do before they know wheather the girls come out or no. John will return to R I between this and Febuy. He does not know but he may go by the way of Orleans but has not made up his mind yet. They are now both at Vincennes. John did not do his business when he was down before—He was unfortunate enough to lose his Grey Horse when he went down before. He was taken sick and died on the road. He was in good order and in fine spirits when he left here. My Horse is now well and in pretty good order. He has been sick all summer.

John expects to hire a couple of hands by the year and as they have a good start by haveing their farming utentials and team expects to get in at least a 160 acres in grain next year besides what they have now. As he was in a hurry this fall he hired 15 Acres broak up for which he paid \$3.75 pr Acre. He will have this Fall about 40 acres in Wheat.

For my part I want to know what you think I had better do for myself. I think it would be as cheap a way for me to hire the land broak up which can be done for \$3.50 and I do not know but a little less pr acre. If there should be much of an object[ion] the fence for makeing rails halling and putting them up will be \$1.87½ pr hundred by the job and find themselves. It would also be necessary to hire one hand by the month and a woman to keep house which might be had the man for 15 dollars pr month and the woman for one dollar and half pr week for wages are very high here. Besides there are a number of utentials necessary as you are aware on a farm. But after the first year I should not think of improving myself but would rent to much more advantage by

taking a third or a specific sum. For there is no difficulty in renting old land but impossible to rent new on hardly any terms—I am anxious to know what I am to do before winter sets in—...

\* \* \* \*

Terre Haute 1st November 1818

Dear Father

[One paragraph omitted]

John now thinks of leaving here about the middle of Decr. for Louisville to take passage in a steam boat for Orleans and go round by water to R. I. Oliver [the driver] will go with him he has now recovered of the Ague which is the case with all the sick ones since there has been frost, the first frost was on the night of the first of October . . .

I have been engaged 3 days last week attending the circuit Court at Terre Haute as a grand juror and on Wednesday last Lieutenant Sturgis late of the Army gave an elegant dinner (at his quarters at Fort Harrison) to the Gentlemen of the bar and a few friends to the number of twenty six. Dan<sup>l</sup> and myself attended—

You appear to think that 25 bushels of corn as trifling[;] it is so but as I did not mention the manner of putting it in which is by an axe. They take an axe and cut the furrow[,] then drop the corn, stamp the place down with the foot which covers it or drop the corn in one furrow and turn the next upon it without doing any thing more to it untill harvest. It in that case produces very good crops but I mentioned 25 bu. as the smallest quantity when worst plowed and put in. Try it that way in R I and see what you will get—

Have made particular inquiry of Messrs Lambert & Sexon[,] two large landholders and good farmers[,] respecting their crops. They say their Wheat produced 35 bush. pr. Acre. The ground was very mellow being all plowed in the spring but to plow and put the Wheat immediately on you cannot expect but a small crop the sod is so tough. Their corn they expect will turn about 80 bush pr acre. They do not know as there will be much difference between their old ground and new. They tended both alike with plow and harrow. Their new ground was plowed in the fall & winter and harrowed in the spring. Their saw mill on Honey creek is now completed but is stoped for want of water. They have contracted for a grist mill to be built at the same place of 2 run of stones to be finished in the spring. Major Markle has an excellent saw & grist mill on Sec. 31 Town 13 Range 8 West on Otter creek which has not been stoped this year though the water is low—

[Two paragraphs omitted]

There has been a treaty concluded with the Indians at St Marys [Ohio] which has eventuated in an extinguishment of Indian title to about 8,000,000 Acres embracing the greater part of good land in Indiana. It is understood that no tract of the same magnitude in the US. affords

so much of what is called first rate land—the Wabash is in general the northern boundary—There is a tract also on the North of the Wabash from the mouth of Tippicanoe to Vermillion a distance of 60 miles and extending 30 miles back from the Wabash. The Indians have reserved no privilege of hunting. The whole tribe of Miammas it is said intend going off in the spring—

I should not think it advisable to purchase any land here at present but be prepared for the sale of the lands above—

[Paragraph omitted]

Dan<sup>l</sup> went through his examination last week and was admitted to the bar. Has got lisenice to plead. He is very well contented and both are anxious for the girls to come out.

[Paragraph omitted]

And believe me Your dutifull Son

John C Packard

[Endorsed] Recd Nov 28th

Answered Jan 8

\* \* \* \*

[To Miss Eliza Packard]

Terre Haute December 6th 1818

Dear Sister

Your letter of November the first came safe to hand yesterday—am very glad to hear you had so pleasant a visit at Providence for I think *such a visit* necessary once or twice a year as you must be very lonesome at the farm— . . .

John thinks of leaving here as soon as the waters rise so that he can get down to Orleans. There will be two boats start from here and one between here and Vincennes as soon as they can get ready. John will go in the first that is ready which will be in the course of two or three weeks as the Wabash is rising in consequence of the rain within a few days.

The waters have been uncommonly low. I was told yesterday by a storekeeper in town who has been on after goods that there ware five hundred Western Merchants in Pittsburgh with their goods[;] some of them have been there ever since the middle of Sept. waiting for the river to rise. The gentleman that told me only came about 12 miles with his boat which was small and was obliged to leave it and come on by land and every place on the river is full of family boats coming on—

The country now has resumed the appearance it had when I came on here. The Prairie is all burnt over[;] you can have no idea how black & dreary it looks. I never saw a more elegant sight than it was when on fire. You could see a line of fire of about 3 or 4 miles in extent—The grass was very high in the wet places[,] higher than I could reach when on horseback[,] and on the high land about 3 or 4 feet high— . . .

Dan returned from Vincennes about a fortnight since with a (smart chance of, as the Kentuckians say) of fruit trees such as Apple Pear Plumb & Chery together with currionts & goosebury bushes and grape vines—For my part I have no where to set out any at present not having any ground prepared. I have the promise of a few Apple and Peach trees in the spring when I expect to be farming. Have been very carefull of myself the summer past. Have not exposed myself atall[;] as I was a new comer[,] did not think it prudent—

Have missed the fine fish that you have very much[;] have not eat any but two or three times since I left home—As I am not a good shot with a rifle and do not know how to hunt have not killed any deer though they are very plenty—

The carriage that Mr J[enckes] came out in I presume was the first that has been in the western part of this state [and] it therefore attracted considerable notice. One man on the way rode up and asked if it was not Lord Selkirk<sup>35</sup> haveing heard that his Lordship went on to the eastward last fall—I do not know what they intend to do with the carriage and horses. I think they are rather poor Property here for they are to[o] good to be used—. . . Do write often and be particular to mention every thing you think of and not be affraid of writing to[o] much—Give my love to all the family and friends and believe me your truly  
affectionate Brother John

\* \* \* \*

My Dear Father

[Paragraph omitted.]

Money is so scarce here that a person must be very carefull of it. No money is now taken in the Receivers Office except US which will put it to an advance of ten or fifteen pr cent . . .

There was some gentleman here the other day when we made an average of the corn that was raised on FHarrison & HCreek Prairies which at 50 bushels pr Acre old ground and new the average, it amounts to 116120—bushels . . .

I informed you . . . that the Indians had reserved no priviledges in the sail of the lands above. I was mistaken[;] they reserved a tract of 7 miles square at the mouth of Rackoon 15 miles above here and the Delawares have reserved their town for 3 years.

### THE END

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Douglas, Fifth Earl of Selkirk (1771-1820), was a Scottish peer with liberal tendencies who founded several settlements in Canada and eventually gained control of the Hudson's Bay Company. He sent out settlers to an immense tract in the Red River Valley, which he had acquired by grant in 1811, but his political enemies—the North-West Fur Company—eventually proved his undoing and the settlement was a failure.



## Four Hundred Dollars for a Hat When Inflation Raged in Rhode Island

by M. RANDOLPH FLATHER\*

One day, in the year 1778, John Howland<sup>1</sup> stopped in at Peter Taylor's hat store in Providence to buy a castor (beaver fur) hat. He tried on several, finally selected one which fitted him, and asked its price. Taylor said it was four hundred dollars, a price which today would certainly be prohibitive, but caused Howland no surprise, because of the depreciated condition of the currency at that time. In any event, Howland said he was on his way home to dinner, but that on his way back he would stop in again, pay for the hat and take it.

An hour or so later he came back with his bundle of money, but Taylor, the hatter, said rather woefully that it would now cost him four hundred dollars for just the material to make a new hat, without any profit to himself. Howland asked him what the price of the hat he had bought should now be, and Taylor said four hundred and fifty dollars. Being a man of high principles, Howland paid him this amount, but stated in leaving he was very glad he had come back when he did because by the next day the price might have been five hundred dollars.

This anecdote is merely an example of conditions in the days of wild currency inflation in Colonial times. The hardships which it ultimately placed upon the people were boundless. According to a *Newport Mercury*<sup>2</sup> in 1786: "The evils of paper money have no end. Its uncertain and fluctuating value is continually creating new schemes of

\*M. Randolph Flather, Ph.B. (Brown) 1924, has been instructor in the American Institute of Banking for several years, and is assistant treasurer, Industrial Trust Company, Providence. The article is a condensation of a paper read before the Society May 5, 1941.

<sup>1</sup> *The Life & Recollections of John Howland*, Edwin M. Stone, 1857, pp. 99, 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Newport Mercury*, May 15, 1786.



deceit. Every principle of justice is put to the rack . . ."

When King William came to the throne of England in 1689, the one thought in his mind was to diminish the power of France<sup>3</sup> under Louis XIV. This he proceeded to do by waging war, and when he died in 1702, Queen Anne, aided and abetted by Marlborough, carried on. The colonies were called on for aid, either in men or ships or both, to participate in expeditions against Port Royal in Acadia, Louisburg on Cape Breton Island, and others. Rhode Island responded with alacrity, and for many years the Colony was pervaded with a martial spirit.

But wars and expeditions are expensive, and by 1710 the Colony was staggering under the cost of its military undertakings. Money had to be got somewhere, so in that year, during the governorship of Samuel Cranston, the Legislature voted its first issue of paper money. The individual pieces were called "bills of credit" and the total amount was £5000. To insure redemption, an annual tax of £1000 was laid for the period during which the bills were to be outstanding, which was five years. With the proceeds of this printing of money the Colony paid its war debt.

In this first issue of bills of credit there was not, in itself, any harm. The trouble was not that it was economically unsound, but that it showed the people how easy it was to pay one's bills simply by starting the printing presses. This evil showed itself five years later in 1715 when the first "bank"<sup>4</sup> of £30,000 was issued.

The distinction between bills of credit and banks should be clearly understood. Bills of credit were secured by a tax levy providing funds for the amortization of the issue over a given period of time. Banks were secured by mortgages on land. Any person wishing to supply himself with money could mortgage his land to the Colony and receive currency.

<sup>3</sup> *Rhode Island — A Study in Separatism*, Irving Berdine Richman, 1905, pp. 67, 74, 78, 83.

<sup>4</sup> *A Brief Account of Emissions of Paper Money*, Elisha R. Potter, 1837, pp. 5, 9.

Upon this loan he was supposed to pay interest at the rate of 5% and to repay the principal in ten years.

There were several fallacies in the scheme, but the major one was that the land was of little value in foreclosure. Land in the rural areas, and since the Colony was but sparsely populated it was nearly all rural, had virtually no sale value. Attempts, therefore, to collect the loans were without real authority and were half-hearted in nature.

Records<sup>5</sup> indicate that in 1728, three years after the first bank should have matured, the loan was extended to thirteen years and then ten years more were allowed for repayment without interest beyond the first thirteen years.

In 1721, before even a start had been made toward the repayment of the first bank, a second bank was issued, and the situation began to take on the traditional attribute of a snow-ball rolling down hill.

It is not surprising that the people began to doubt the value of currency issued under such conditions, with so little apparent collateral value behind it, and with so little financial wisdom in the government that issued it. Depreciation began, — depreciation in terms of purchasing power, and depreciation in terms of "hard," or metallic money. Silver, for example, which had been worth eight shillings an ounce had risen to twenty shillings an ounce by 1731.

Meantime, the people of the Colony had become sharply divided into two parties. The shipping interests, largely centered in Newport, were being severely hurt by the decline in value of the local currency. The landowners, or Agriculturalists, as they were called, were, on the other hand, being benefited, and unfortunately this class was numerically stronger.

Between 1715 and 1786, there were ten banks, but space does not permit a description of them. It was a stormy period in which orgies of wild inflation were followed by periods of reform. Counterfeiting<sup>11</sup> was common in spite of

<sup>5</sup> *A History of American Currency*, William G. Sumner, 1874, pp. 1, 18, 51.

severe penalties such as whipping, imprisonment, and the cropping of ears. Even the penalty of death was provided, but there is no evidence that this extreme punishment was ever enforced.

An appeal was addressed to the King of England to stop the inflation of Rhode Island money. At first he declared himself powerless to help, but later, in 1751, Parliament passed an act forbidding all further banks, and permitting the issuance of bills of credit for but two objects: current expenses of the Colony and expenses arising from the exigencies of war. After this the paper money situation in Rhode Island quieted down. A proposed bank of fifty thousand pounds was never issued, nor were there any more sums issued as loans or banks while Rhode Island remained a dependency of the British Crown.<sup>3</sup> In 1763, at the end of the struggle for Canada, gold and silver coin were made by act of the Assembly the only lawful money in the Colony. The recovery by Rhode Island of sanity upon the money question was remarkably swift. Moreover, throughout the War of the Revolution, Rhode Island maintained its good reputation. In 1776, it accepted with great docility the recommendation of a committee of the New England states to emit no unnecessary bills of credit, but rather to levy taxes or borrow, and, in 1780, acting upon a resolution of the Continental Congress, it passed a measure equitably adjusting between debtor and creditor the complexities growing out of the Continental currency.

However, Rhode Island was not yet through with its paper money. In 1786 the State indulged in one last wild spree which was the worst of any. In May 1786 the agricultural party carried the election.<sup>6</sup> The new Assembly contained seventy members, forty-five of whom had not appeared on the rolls of the previous session.<sup>7</sup> Neither the governor nor the deputy governor was re-elected. William

<sup>6</sup> *Providence Gazette*, May 6, 1786.

<sup>7</sup> *Rhode Island and the Formation of the Union*, Frank Greene Bates, 1898, pp. 123, 143.

Greene of Warwick was replaced by John Collins of Newport as Governor, which, at first glance, is surprising since Newport had been the stronghold of the hard money party in the days of great shipping. However, it must be remembered that Newport was struck a blow by the War and the occupation by the British from which it never recovered.<sup>8</sup> More than half the population had moved away, and the ships which had provided the city with its life blood either had been sunk or had sailed away to other ports.

No sooner had the new Legislature convened than it passed a bill providing for the emission of £100,000 in paper money. This was the tenth,<sup>9</sup> and, as it turned out, the last Bank.

As soon as the money was in circulation it began to depreciate in value, so the legislature passed another act in an attempt to maintain its value.<sup>10</sup> This act forced creditors to take the money at its face value in payment of a debt when it was offered to them. If the creditor refused to receive the money in payment, the debtor applied to a judge of the Court and paid the money to him. The judge then notified the creditor to come and get his money within ten days. If he did not do so, the facts were advertised in the press for three weeks and at the end of that time the debtor was discharged of his debt.

Under such legislation it may not be wondered that creditors took every means possible to elude their debtors. Here was a situation completely in reverse of normal. Here were men attempting to avoid being paid back money which they had previously loaned. Instances<sup>11</sup> are related of creditors leaping from the rear windows of their houses, or hiding themselves in their attics, to avoid receiving payment of their loans.

<sup>8</sup> *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, Samuel Greene Arnold, 1860, II, 447.

<sup>9</sup> *Providence Gazette*, May 13, 1786.

<sup>10</sup> *Providence Gazette*, July 8, 1786.

<sup>11</sup> *Rhode Island Historical Tract* #8, Potter & Rider, 1880, pp. 51, 62, 63, 90, 108, 120, 121.

Of course, the higher type of resident disapproved of the action of debtors in forcing payment in depreciated currency. In fact, in 1789 the Rhode Island State Society of the Cincinnati<sup>12</sup> expelled Joseph Arnold of Warwick for a "Tender of the paper Currency for a specie demand notwithstanding the most pressing and repeated admonitions to the contrary." David Brown of Johnston, a member of St. John's Episcopal Church, was excommunicated for a similar offense.

The death knell to paper money in Rhode Island was sounded by the famous law case of Trevett vs. Weeden.<sup>11</sup> John Trevett purchased a piece of meat of John Weeden, a butcher in Newport, tendering in payment therefor paper money which Weeden declined to receive. Complaint was made to the Hon. Paul Mumford, Chief Justice of the Superior Court. Weeden was immediately arrested and tried for the offense. He was extremely poor but in spite of this the ablest counsel in the State were provided for him. These were the Hon. Henry Marchant and General James M. Varnum. The defendant was charged with violation of the statute requiring sellers of goods to accept paper money. The charge was met with a three-fold plea:<sup>3</sup> first, that the statute had expired (a technical contention based on the ambiguous wording of the act); second, that the matter complained of had been made triable before a special court uncontrolled by the supreme judiciary; and third, that the statute was unconstitutional and void, because by it there was denied to the defendant the right of trial by jury.

The first two points of the plea for the accused were dwelt upon briefly. The third, — that of denial of trial by jury, — was elaborated exhaustively and with deep feeling. It was James Varnum's contention that trial by one's fellows (the mode of trial secured to every Englishman by Magna Charta) had been established in Rhode Island by the charter of the Colony, which provided that the inhabitants "should

<sup>12</sup> *Rhode Island Society of the Cincinnati Record Book # 1*, pp. 52, 54. Arnold was reinstated, long after his demise.

have and enjoy all liberties . . . of free and natural subjects . . . as if they were born within the realm of England." The fact that Rhode Island was no longer a Colony of England had no bearing on the matter. The other point stressed by Varnum was: Who, in a given case, was to decide whether an inhabitant — a citizen — had been deprived of a chartered right? To quote Varnum's words, "Have the judges a power to repeal, to amend, to alter laws, or to make new laws? God Forbid! In that case they would become legislators." "But," he continued, "the judiciary have the sole power of judging of laws . . . and cannot admit any act of the Legislature as law which is against the Constitution."

Here was the whole case for the accused, and it was a strong one.

In rendering their decision, the judges waived the constitutional point and fell back upon the second plea, namely, that the complaint had been made triable before a special court and that the Superior Court lacked jurisdiction. It therefore dismissed the case.

The decision, construed as it was as a vindication of both Weeden and of honest money, hit the State with terrific impact. Rhode Island's individualistic democracy was shocked profoundly. Was it true that in Rhode Island the ruling element was no longer the people? Were judges more powerful than the General Assembly? Not so long as the General Assembly was composed of red-blooded men! Paul Mumford, Joseph Hazard, Thomas Tillinghast, Gilbert Devol, and David Howell — the five judges who had heard the case — were summoned to appear before the Assembly to defend themselves. The summons recited that the court had declared an act of the supreme legislature unconstitutional and void, and by so doing "tended to abolish legislative authority."

The judges chose David Howell, the youngest of their number, a Princeton graduate, and the only trained lawyer of the court, to represent them. He explained that the act had not been declared unconstitutional, but, at the same

time, proclaimed it the right of the bench to pass upon the constitutionality of any legislative act. There were several stormy sessions and many heated words, but, at length, the judges were acquitted and allowed to continue in office. However, it is notable that at the election of State officers in the following year, in the Spring of 1788, the only member of the court re-elected was the Chief Justice, the Hon. Paul Mumford. Mumford had not taken part in the decision, whereas, the four other judges who gave the decision were not continued in office.

However, this action against the judges proved to be only the dying convulsion of the paper money party. In 1789, the legal tender statute of 1786 was repealed, and in 1793, the Assembly declared gold and silver to be the only lawful money in the State. From then on, Rhode Island managed her money matters so well that she was above reproach.

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### Book Review

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#### THE SWORD ON THE TABLE

By Winfield Townley Scott

Norfolk, Conn. New Directions Press, 1942. Pp. 28. Cloth \$1.00. Paper 35 cents

*New Directions*, which is the publisher of "The Sword on the Table," has produced a valuable and interesting group of books of poetry in its series called "The Poet of the Month." The list is catholic and inclusive, the price reasonable, the printing and design of a sustained excellence and variety. They (a polite generalization of the name of James Laughlin) have made no mistake in adding Mr. Scott's book to their second year's list. The book is well designed, the Scotch Roman type is clearly legible, and the content is apt (particularly for Rhode Islanders) and well written. Dorr's Rebellion occurred one hundred years ago: its results were great and worthwhile: it reflects in a rather terrible manner the continuing struggle in which we now find ourselves — the struggle to assure all men everywhere an equal share in freedom of opportunity and responsibility.

If one excludes the military prowess of General Greene, the somewhat dubious fame of General Burnside, the brilliant but brief career of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry and the remarkable but now ironically moot achievement of his brother Matthew, one is left to discern in Rhode Island history only two men of that outstanding quality which has per-



manently advanced the larger democratic theory. They are Roger Williams and Thomas Wilson Dorr. We have produced many admirable, many contentious, and many successfully conservative men; but with the exception of Williams and Dorr, none has qualified to stand truly high in the story of the progress of man, Williams was successful in his experiment, endowed with the gifts of brain and heart and character that made possible his astonishing achievement in the furthering of human liberty. Dorr saw the goal, had the character to pursue it against the current of his class and his education, had the brains and the heart to frame his precepts into a workable and practicable form, but failed at the end to reach a conclusion, although he forced others to come to that conclusion without him.

It is the story of this vision and its partial accomplishment, and of the personal failure and tragedy of Dorr, that has occupied Mr. Scott. He has cleverly and justly set Dorr's failure against his intention, and in so doing has created a conflict that is interesting and moving. It is a pity that he has stopped where he has, for in his poem he has raised ghosts and hopes as old and as fresh as time itself, and this is but a synopsis of what he might have done. The poem is but a thousand lines long, and that is enough merely to sketch in the material he has collected and excellently digested. Surely, he himself can hardly quarrel with a reviewer who, putting down the book, cries, "More, more!"

Mr. Scott comes closest to completion of his theme in the fine rhymed section, *Who is the Prisoner at the Bar?* He lets us see the rounded picture he might have drawn of man's travail, in the moving section, *Night of the Arsenal*, where Walter S. Burges speaks and fears for his friend. Again, the conflict is neatly pointed to, but left incomplete, in that part of the section called *Night in the Arsenal*, where Sullivan Dorr speaks against his brother to other men, more occupied with the appearance of his own class loyalty than with the deeper and more enduring and more valid loyalties: yet it is but a sketch, when it might have been developed further. Perhaps some day Mr. Scott will write the whole into a longer narrative poem that allows his talents scope for full fashioned development.

The verse is accomplished, sometimes moving, and always clear — for which one is deeply grateful. It represents a further step and a good one, toward the return of verse from self-conscious isolationism to whole-hearted intervention. It proves again what should never have needed proving (had not fossilization set in), that the form is unimportant, that old forms are old only when the content of them is prematurely aged, but are new and fresh and firm when the content has vitality, clarity, and a sufficient technical excellence to know what it is doing.

CHRISTOPHER LAFARGE\*

\*Christopher LaFarge is the author of *Hoxie Sells His Acres* (1934); *Each to the Other* (1939); *Poems and Portraits* (1940).



## The Brown Papers

An agreement recently entered into by a Committee, sponsored and financed by the Social Science Research Council, of New York, with Brown University, the John Carter Brown Library and the Rhode Island Historical Society, at last opens the way for the arrangement and exploitation of the wealth of historical materials contained in the papers of the various members of the Brown family. These manuscripts are housed in the John Carter Brown Library and the Library of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

Work on this ambitious project, which began on September first, 1942, is to continue over a period of several years under the direction of Prof. James B. Hedges, of Brown University. When it is completed, the treasures of these great collections will, for the first time, be thoroughly available to historical investigators. A preliminary examination of the papers<sup>1</sup> has already revealed their significant bearing, not only on many aspects of American economic development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but upon a multitude of other subjects as well.

Another result of the project, which is the especial concern of the Committee referred to above, will be a business history of the Brown family over a period of one hundred and fifty years. It is the belief of the Committee that the long-sustained business career of the family, characterized, as it was, by an agility and alertness which enabled them to shift readily the emphasis of their activity in response to changing economic conditions and new opportunities within the country, affords an unusual opportunity for a type study of the role of the entrepreneur in American economic development. This history of the family is expected to be as complete and comprehensive as it is possible to make it, and it may run to three volumes.

W. G. R.

<sup>1</sup>"The Record of a Rhode Island Business Family," James B. Hedges, American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings*, Vol. 51, pp. 21-36.

## News-Notes

## of the Rhode Island Historical Society

The new home of the Society — John Brown House, 52 Power St. — was informally opened for the use of our members and the public on July 7, 1942. More than 650 visitors have signed the register in the succeeding two months. Many came to work in the Library, more from curiosity, and others to participate in meetings of societies which were the guests of the Historical Society.

Prevented by transportation problems from holding their annual Field Day the South County Museum, on July 25, displayed in the Music Room a collection of smaller articles from its treasures. On August 7, the 200th anniversary of the birth of General Nathanael Greene was observed in appropriate exercises on the Terrace and lawn. The Society was honored by the presence of Governor J. Howard McGrath, United States Senator Theodore Francis Green, Hon. Francis J. McCabe representing Mayor Roberts, distinguished clergy and over 250 members and guests. The Order of Exercises and principal addresses appear on pages 109-25 of this issue.

Forty representatives of 23 organizations concerned with the collection and preservation of historical records and objects united in the annual meeting of the Southern New England Conference of Historical Societies, August 26, at the Rhode Island Historical Society. Recognizing the importance of preserving the unofficial, as well as the official records of the present war the members present volunteered to make scrap-books of newspaper clippings, collect programs and other ephemera of local interest. The Conference unanimously adopted a memorial to Governor McGrath requesting him to appoint a commission of five, including the State Records Commissioner, the Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society and representatives of

educational institutions and historical societies to supervise the work, in particular to mark out the borderline between official and unofficial activities.

On September 1, the National Federation of Music Clubs terminated a walking tour of old Providence at John Brown House. There was music in the Drawing Room by a harp trio and refreshments were served on the Terrace. Delegates from points as far away as Arkansas, Iowa and Maine (and nearer by) all expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to view the historic Mansion and many expressed the opinion that it was most suitable to the purposes of an historical society.

A throng of members and guests inspected our new home on the occasion of Open House, September 23.

\* \* \* \*

The Patriotic Room, at the south-west corner of the third floor — which may be reached by elevator — is now the Headquarters for the Society of the Colonial Wars, the Sons of the American Revolution, the Society of the Cincinnati, the Roger Williams Family Association and the Mayflower Society. We hope that other similar organizations will be interested to make this room their permanent headquarters.

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The Block Island Historical Society held its first meeting, Sunday, September 6. Your Director had the honor of participating in the ceremonies, attended by more than 100 persons; proof, if any were needed, that the people are interested in the history of Rhode Island. During September your Director has addressed the Roger Williams Family Association, the Jamestown Historical Society and the Fall Meeting of the Rhode Island State D. A. R. at Hillsgrove M. E. Church, under the auspices of the Col. Christopher Greene Chapter.

W. G. R.



